



Institute of Marine
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November 23, 2009

The Honorable Frank LoBiondo
U.S. House of Representatives
2427 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman LoBiondo,

Thank you for your unwavering support of the Delaware Bay Oyster Revitalization project. In our continued effort to obtain funding for this important project, I write in support of the Army Corps of Engineers' request for language in the 2010 Water Resources Development Act to increase the maximum funds allowed for the Delaware Bay Oyster Restoration Project to \$10,000,000.

The shell-planting program seeks to revitalize the oyster stocks of Delaware Bay through a two pronged strategy: (1) enhancement of recruitment and (2) maintenance of the ecology of the bay by sustaining the oyster reef. The onset of Dermo in 1989, a product of global warming of the Mid-Atlantic, has doubled natural mortality rate and thereby jeopardized the future of the oyster industry and the critical oyster reef habitat of the bay by decreasing oyster abundance and limiting the addition of shell that is essential to maintain the integrity of the oyster reef itself. The oyster industries of Delaware and New Jersey nearly disappeared during the 1990s as a consequence. The Shellfish Councils of Delaware and New Jersey, both state regulatory agencies, along with their oyster industries, Rutgers and other academic and non-profit institutions in Delaware and New Jersey, bayshore community organizations, and the Delaware River and Basin Commission began a bi-state shell planting program in Delaware Bay in 2005. This program addresses the decline in oyster abundance by enhancing recruitment and adding shell to counterweigh the loss of shell imposed by the effect of Dermo disease on the oyster's population dynamics.

The result of the program so far has been an increase in the oyster resource, a stabilization of the shell bed, and most importantly, an increase in oyster harvest with concomitant economic benefits for the bayshore towns and townships of Delaware and New Jersey. The program has demonstrated a laudatory return on tax-payer investment of at least \$25-30 for every \$1 of public investment and has permitted expansion of the industry, thus creating new jobs in the most impoverished region of the state, while maintaining sustainability of the oyster resource.

Continuation of this project is critical as cessation of shell planting will jeopardize both the ecological recovery of the bay and the economic recovery of the bayshore communities.



We strongly support the Army Corp of Engineer's request and urge that the funding level permitted this program be increased to \$10 million.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francisco E. Werner". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "F" and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Francisco E. Werner
Director